1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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CULINARY ARTS: METHODS OF FOOD PREPARATION

262 These Indians obtain their food from agriculture, hunting, fishing, and by gathering the wild fruits of the forest. Among the Miskito living near the coast the staple food is sweet cassava, but in the other regions of the country its place is occupied by bananas; among the Sumu maize also plays a great rôle.

252 While at home the men never do any cooking and would consider such an act beneath their dignity, but after the return from the chase they barbecue the meat which is not to be consumed immediately.

261 The Indian has an enormous appetite when there is plenty of food, especially fish and meat, at hand; on the other hand, in case of food shortage, they are able to travel and work with scarcely anything to eat.

● 264 SERVING OF THE MEAL.—No regularity is observed in eating, but food may be taken at any time. When the meal is ready the grown-up men are served first in their hammocks with the best and largest shares. A calabash of broth or soup (M.: *pilali;* S.: *di wasni, di waska*) and a bijagua leaf containing salt is also taken to them. The women and children eat together; they sit on the ground, forming a circle around the remainder of the food, which is spread upon a layer of large leaves. There is, as a rule, little left when the men have been served, but the women and children have taken their share previously. While the pot is boiling they crowd around the fire, and keep on eating little bits of meat together with plantains or bananas roasted in the hot ashes. The Indians do not speak much during meals; a visitor is never questioned while he is eating, as that would be a breach of etiquette.

262 [252] ANIMAL FOOD.—Meat and fish are either boiled with water or roasted in the hot ashes. The meat is obtained from the chase; the Miskito living on the edge of the savannas also own cattle which they slaughter for meat. Other domestic animals, as pigs and fowls, are seldom eaten, but are commonly sold to strangers; this is also the case with fowl eggs. The Indians, as a rule, do not care much for the flesh and products of animals of foreign origin. Certain indigenous animals are taboo. The favorite meat of both tribes is the red monkey (*Ateles* sp.) and the white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.).

262 252 The Sumu sometimes eat frogs (M.: *burka;* S.: *burka, burki*), removing their skin first in the hot ashes; to the Miskito this amphibian is taboo. Birds' eggs are eaten, even when they are practically rotten, but the eggs of the domestic fowls are not esteemed. The winged females of the leaf-carrying ants (*Atta cephalotes* syn. *Oecodoma cephalotes;* M.: *wiwi;* S.: *isdaŋ*) are also caught when

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
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cotton fluff is placed in the notch and the twirling continued. Several 373
fragments of the cotton begin to glow and these are fanned into flame. Today, many Indians use matches but the primitive method of making fire is still used to a great extent. Many of these fires may have been started a generation or more ago. They are tended or kept burning in iron or stone cooking ovens within the houses.

Many of the Miskito use bamboo tongs or tweezers to pull roasted 415
plantains, cassava, and other foods out of the hot ashes. The Miskitos use large wooden mortars *(uno, no)* and hard wooden pestles *(una, mihta)* to pound grains and fruits. The pestle is single headed and tapers toward the handle end. The Sumu Indians on the other hand use a metate and mealing stone for grinding maize and cacao. Light iron tripod post *(dikwa)* are found in every household, and have replaced earthen vessels for cooking purposes. Large calabashes with a small hole in the apex, just large enough to insert a finger, are the common water canteens *(kahmuntara)*. Segments of a large species of bamboo are also used to haul water in certain areas. They are made from a section of the bamboo stem cut so that a nodal septum serves as a bottom. The stem may be cut off immediately below the next septum or it may be cut outside of each septum to convert it into a small barrel. A hole is then drilled for filling and a plug inserted.

Fermented beverages are stored in large earthen vessels *(sumi)*. Plates, cups and glasses are made from the calabash *(kalmi)* fruit, which is cut and the soft watery pulp and seeds removed. Square, round, or oval shaped bowls are sometimes made of mahogany and other woods, but calabash bowls seem to be preferred. A variety of wooden spoons, pat sticks, and stirring sticks are also used. A primitive sugar mill *(tranko)* is employed to squeeze the juice from sugar cane.

It has been observed that the Miskito Indian has an enormous ap- 264
petite. At some meals he may take as many as a dozen helpings. On the other hand he may go days with hardly any food at all, specially during inclement weather, or during a hunt or a long travel. Generally, the women do the cooking, the men only on trips away from home. No regularity is observed in eating, most of the Indians eating whenever they are hungry or after hunting. They usually have one meal in the early morning and one at night before retiring. There is no midday meal. When a meal is ready the grownup men are served first with the best and largest shares. A calabash of soup or stew is usually served first. Salt if available is eaten separately. The women and children eat together. Indians rarely speak during a meal, and a visitor is never questioned while he too should remain in silence, since to do otherwise would be a breach of etiquette.